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## A NEW CRITICISM OF HEGELIANISM: IS IT VALID?

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MR. D'ARCY'S book<sup>1</sup> is an attempt to harness Hegel and Berkeley by means of a postulate. The postulate is not, on the face of it, Kantian, but Hegelian. He substitutes for a *Ding-an-sich* a unity—a superpersonal unity, including multiple personalities, which is to be reached by an act of faith. Thus we are free to interpret the physical world by idealism, but each individual may be left independent of others. The trinity, miracles, and incarnation all can be stated seemingly without opposition. Apart from the question of postulates, the main question is whether Hegel and Berkeley can be thus unequally yoked together.

Hegelianism is not simply a metaphysical system that substitutes the category of the subject for that of substance. The consistent application of this principle, already given in Kant's "transcendental ego," distinguishes Hegel's system from those that preceded it. But, what is of more importance, though it flows legitimately from this, is that with Hegel, philosophy becomes a method of thought rather than a search for fundamental entities. From this standpoint the task of abstract thought is to bring to consciousness the *form* in which essential problems present themselves and the *form* which their solution must take. For example, the problem of the freedom of the will appears in consciousness, not as the conflict of one entity, the willing subject, with other entities, such as inherited impulses, or even the divine will in predestination. On the contrary, the conflict is one that lies back of the final act in which alone the will can be recognized. The problem is one that involves the opposition of tendencies to conduct, with some one of which the individual has identified himself in the past. But the very nature of the situation, in an essential problem of conduct, leads to the negation of this tendency; *i. e.*, the identification of the self with the opposite line of action. The solution lies not in the measuring of forces by the contending tendencies or impulses. Such a conception inevitably limits the self to certain impulses, or in indeterminism to an abstract, indifferent will that lies outside of all

<sup>1</sup> *Idealism and Theology: A Study of Presuppositions.* By CHARLES F. D'ARCY, B.D. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1899. Pp. 294. 6s.

the content of experience. As soon as we recognize, however, that the self is identified with all the contending elements, the necessary form of the solution is seen to be the synthesis. This synthesis is, therefore, something more than the contending elements. From the standpoint of contending forces, one of which represents the self, there must be measuring of forces, and, for the finite force, certain compulsion. In this phase the known world of the individual can offer no solution which will not be in terms of the necessity of causal series. But this necessity cannot hold for the synthesis; for this transcends the opposition. The very fact of synthesis implies a new world, of which the former conflicting elements were the conditions, but which is new because it has overcome the necessity which was expressed in the conflict. In every moral act—one that follows upon deliberation—we pass into a world that is new, in just this respect, at least, that the necessity which brought out an irrepressible conflict no longer exists. Or, to put it in somewhat different terms, the mere statement of a problem never can involve its solution; otherwise there is no real problem, only a misunderstanding or a formal fallacy. If, then, the only necessity that can exist for us is inevitably transcended and negated by the synthesis which must solve the problem, it cannot possibly be predicated of the self whose act of will is found in the synthesis.

In this illustration the difference between a dialectic which gives the method of thought and a metaphysical speculation which postulates entities seems to me to come out very clearly. It is possible to recognize a function of philosophy which it belongs to the genius of Hegel to have made conceivable. Entities are but formulations of thought at different phases of experience. With every advance these formulations change. We can, therefore, never posit them as ultimate, nor can any analysis which does no more than bring these formulations to consciousness give the solution of the problems which face us. For the solution involves their negation and synthesis. The more sharply they are defined in consciousness, the more clearly their opposition to each other comes out, and the more hopeless the deadlock appears. On the other hand, the recognition that the entities must dissolve, and their contents appear in a synthesis higher than they, sets us free from the bondage of law and gives us the freedom of spirit out of which springs the hypothesis bearing with it a new world.

Philosophy, like every other phase of analytical and abstract thought, never has as its function to reveal reality. Reality lies in immediate experience, and must be sought there. Thought can only

make us conscious of how we act, and thus give us the advantage of a conscious technique. When Hegel substituted a method for a *Ding-an-sich* he took the same step which physical science took when it abandoned a metaphysical substance, or Democritean atoms, and devoted itself to the laws of motion.

Hegel was not fully equal to his own discovery. For him *sein* is not only a moment in the dialectic; it is also, in a certain sense, a goal toward which the dialectic moves. It is, therefore, practically an underlying entity, *i. e.*, a formulation which persists throughout the movement of thought. This difficulty is one that has pursued most of those influenced by him, and is involved in the problem of Mr. d'Arcy's book.

The problem is that of the objective validity of our knowledge of other personalities. The position of the author is that an impassable chasm lies between the consciousness of individuals. He admits that the idealist may be justified as regards the physical world. "It *may* be true (though much might be said to the contrary), in the case of material things, that the only obstacle to perfect knowledge is the infinity of detail; but it is not true in the case of minds. Mind is separated from mind by a barrier which is, not figuratively, but literally, impassable. It is impossible for any *ego* to leap this barrier and enter into the experiences of any other *ego*" (p. 75).

It is at least conceivable, then, that the knowledge of physical realities in our experience is objective, without any reference to a reality that lies outside actual or possible experience. The objectivity of this knowledge of ours does not depend upon the bridging of any chasm between the consciousness of the *ego* and a *Ding-an-sich* beyond. For the completion of knowledge through an indefinite number of details would not build any such bridge. If "it *may* be true," it is at least conceivable. The objectivity of the knowledge depends upon the form of knowledge, not upon a reference beyond the possible conscious experience of the *ego*. If this interpretation of the author is correct, he admits that the so-called epistemological problem is soluble for physical objects by modern idealism, but not so for the knowledge of other personalities.

That this interpretation is correct is indicated by his statement that the epistemological problem really has its roots in this impassable chasm between "minds." To be sure, he asserts that anyone may take refuge in a Berkeleian idealism, from which no philosophical idealism can oust him. Literally construed, this should mean that our

knowledge is all subjective, that we cannot affirm the objective validity of even physical objects. But I cannot conceive that he wishes to be so interpreted; for if this is possible, Kant and Hegel have accomplished nothing, and the author's constant plea is that their idealism has a great message for us, if we only recognize that it cannot bridge the chasm between one personality and another. As further evidence of his willingness to accept the idealistic position that our knowledge of the world about us is objective and valid, I may refer to his quotation from Bosanquet, in which he seems to agree with that neo-Hegelian that the panorama of consciousness is objectively valid. Finally the author accepts as the valuable contribution of idealism the constructive organizing function of the self in all knowledge—the recognition that the rationality—*i. e.*, objectivity of the world—lies in the rational processes of the knowing self. The criticism which he offers to this position is that, in so constructing and organizing it, the self becomes either too supreme and is identified with God, which, he says, contradicts our own consciousness, or else is entirely lost in the divine personality, and thus sacrifices its own initiative and freedom. From all these evidences we conclude that Mr. d'Arcy must accept the objective character of our knowledge of the physical world in the sense of Hegel, and recognizes with him that a *Ding-an-sich* is a contradiction in terms, so far as Kant assumed this to answer to our sensations.

However, Mr. d'Arcy demands that we should recognize a further value in the conception of subjectivity beyond its opposition to objectivity. For, while it is contrasting itself with the object, it is at the same time recognizing the subject as that within which both subject and object lie, or, to use his own phraseology, as the "crystal sphere" which envelops and necessarily includes the whole process. In a word, our knowledge of the physical world about us is objective or rational. It is systematic, and in its systematic character we find the very meaning of what we term the validity of knowledge. Our confidence in our knowledge lies in its law-abiding character, and we find by philosophic analysis that this character flows from our own cognitive processes. But this objective world, which is contrasted with our subjective world of feeling and sensation, still lies within another subjective world of our own spiritual nature, that, according to the author, can never be analyzed, because it is that from which all analysis must proceed. This, then, is the form of Berkeleian idealism promulgated—a Hegelian world of reality which lies inside a subjective world that is literally, though he rejects the term, "without windows."

But the author attempts further to bring evidence from this objective world itself of a reference to a reality lying beyond the inclusive subject. There are breaks which he thinks cannot be explained in the periodic geologic processes, in the different stages of evolution, which indicate in some way — not clearly defined — the intervention of forces or elements lying outside the world, but especially in human development, in the intervention of individuals in each other's experience, during the whole of human history. Leaving out of account for the moment the solution the author suggests, this is all a mere superficial playing with Hegelianism. Objectivity is not something that can be recognized in a physical environment, and then be dismissed when applied to another set of objects, such as personalities. It is either a fallacious objectivity, or else it is applicable in the whole world of knowledge, for its validity has nothing to do with the content of the object, but solely with its form.

If we feel that our experiences are valid because they are rationally organized, and recognize that this organization flows from a cognitive principle with which the self is identified, the feeling must be justified and accepted, no matter what is the content of the experience. It makes absolutely no difference whether we can trace out all details of knowledge or not, whether breaks occur in the system or not. We reach this conception of the validity of knowledge, not by an induction from the organization of the world, but from an analysis of the thought-process itself. If the whole world consisted of breaks and chasms, the analysis of the attempted thought-process would still show that whatever reflective knowledge we could have must find its validity in a rational thought-process. And what shall we say of this subject which is all-inclusive? The author sets it over against other subjects which for them are also all-inclusive. Thought, then, does transcend the chasm and is able to think these subjects and think of them as in some way breaking into each other. To be sure, he appeals for his justification to what he is pleased to call common-sense. We cannot help assuming other human individuals and their interferences. We can think them, but we cannot place them in our own worlds, for each must be by itself within its own panorama. What a strange contradiction to our immediate consciousness! Who finds more objectivity in physical objects than in the personalities about him? Who feels that he is living in his own thought-world of physical objects within which no other personality has any place? Or who for a moment assumes that the system of thought by means of which he analyzes his world

and relates its objects applies only to the material things? There is nothing more immediate than the personalities of our fellows. There is nothing so clearly conceived, so distinctly thought out, as those elements of our world. We depend as surely upon the rational organization of the social world as upon that of the material, and there is the same source for this rational organization as subsists for the world of the physical sciences. Is the conception of the social and psychical sciences a lie made out of whole cloth? Or is there a principle which unifies these that is not revealed in the process of cognition? This is the conclusion the author draws. There is such a unity, a superpersonal unity which includes all personalities. It is also superrational. Assume this as that which lies outside the all-inclusive (*sic*) subject which includes subject and object, and all difficulties vanish.

We have, then, two types of knowledge—one a process of relating and organizing experience which belongs to the physical world, and another intuitive and belonging to “common-sense,” revealing to us other personalities like our own which can never enter our thought-world as do the physical objects in our environment. Finally we form the conception of a unity which transcends the unity of reflective constructive thought—a unity which, being superpersonal, can never be entertained by a personal intelligence. Now, where are all these ideas presented in this book and springing from the mind of the author? Do they lie outside of his world of thought? Do they resist or transcend the “crystal sphere” of his ultimate subject? Do they not find a place naturally enough inside his personality? Do they require a higher unity than is given in his thought-process? Could there be a more excellent example given of Hegel’s axiom that thought cannot set up a limit without by this very act transcending it? If this new Berkeleyian idealism, which incloses like a Chinese nest of boxes the Hegelian idealism, can possibly be thought, it must include within itself the whole system by means of which it attempts to get out of itself.

The author would undoubtedly say that the unity is not thought, but postulated and accepted by an act of faith. But unity is a thought-relation. It comes back to the thinking activity. Faith may assume elements in a system which we cannot fill in or analyze out, but it cannot postulate something that necessarily lies outside any thought-system. And as unity is a relation, what applies to it at all applies to it throughout. It is not unity if it is both personal and superpersonal, if it is both conscious and self-conscious, though a system may contain

elements some of which are conscious and some not, or some self-conscious and some only conscious. But a system is a thought-product, while its unity flows from the thought-process that presents it in consciousness. To say that the personal unity of our consciousness is an inadequate statement of a higher superpersonal unity is either a contradiction in terms or else the author means system and not unity. He is substituting a thing—a *Ding-an-sich*—for a thought-process, and the category of substance takes precedence of that of subject. It has a conceivable meaning to affirm that we all inhere in a divine substance which is not itself personal, but all of whose parts are personal; it has no meaning to speak of a relation of unity being in some elements of a system personal and in the system as a whole superpersonal. Even if one is proclaiming a mystery, the terms he uses must have meaning.

As I indicated above, the difficulty in the application of Hegelianism lies in not sticking to its nature as a method. If thought is to be set up as a spiritual force or substance, if we are to talk of spirit as opposed to matter, if we are to refer to minds as ultimate things, we are talking about entities, and all falls under the category of substance. If we recognize that it is the function of thought to dissolve and reconstruct all entities and things, that there is no formulation which may not conceivably be reconstructed, then we must recognize that there can be no unity higher than the unity of thought, otherwise it would not appear in our thought-world, or, what is the same thing, it would be inconceivable. So far as knowledge is concerned, and conduct based upon knowledge, the organization that flows from thought is necessarily ultimate. It certainly does not lie within the power of a thinker to introduce a higher unity out of the analysis of thought-processes. Again the answer might be that it was not the analysis of the thought-process that led to the assumption, but the insuperable obstacles that face any idealistic system which demand the postulate of this higher unity.

Passing over the contradictions which I have tried to point out above, what are these insuperable obstacles? The freedom of the will, contingency and necessity, the problem of evil. Mr. d'Arcy assumes that these problems all spring from the impassable chasm which separates personality from personality. The freedom of the will, as above indicated, can be maintained only if the individual in his rational processes organizes his own world. If he is but a phase of a divine spiritual principle, it must be the higher principle that works in him, or else he must be himself the deity. Furthermore, there is contingency in the world which leads us back to the action of other individuals that

is not under the direction of one's own rational control. One's rationalized world is always being broken in upon by events which are not a part of his rational processes. With these appearances, which are illustrated by the author in history sacred and secular, the contingent seems to find a legitimate place even within the necessity of the known world. Finally evil, as the outcome of a rationally ordered world, the determination of the divine spirit, is irrational, but may be accepted when it is the expression of the finite individual in his freedom, and when it is not the expression of the ultimate central principle of the universe.

Now, in all this the author has evidently simply taken the eighteenth-century individual and clothed him in a Hegelian world. He remains an isolated element, self-centered, the spring of evil. So far as the organization of his own personality is concerned, I fail to see that he is any more admirable in his idealistic "crystal sphere" than he was as he came from the hands of Hobbes. To be sure, the author postulates the superpersonal unity which is supposed to connect him in some other spiritual dimension with God and man. But this does not assist at all in the problem of rationalizing the individual in society, in presenting the social self as the core of the personal self. In all these points we see that personality is postulated as the spring of the contingent, the arbitrary, and the bad. These elements must be made at home in the universe, and it is the privilege of fathering these which in Mr. d'Arcy's mind rescues personality from the abyss of a Hegelian abstraction. So far as the individual is merely rational, law-abiding, and good, he lives within his Hegelian preserves and is abstract. He becomes concrete when he breaks into somebody's else world, and furnishes him with a contingent element, or suffers like violence himself. Underneath we feel the old identity between self-assertion and evil, and the evidence of freedom in arbitrary decision. The eighteenth-century individual became concrete in self-assertion, in demolishing the conventional order of society, and annulling authority—in a word, in the revolution. Have we no better expression for him in concrete activity than that of *der verneinende Geist*? Making him with Hamlet a king of infinite space within an idealistic nutshell does not help matters. The problem, then, comes to this: Is it possible to express the positive element in personality in terms of rationality, law, and goodness? I think the author is right in identifying the problem with the question of chasm between individuals. The freedom of the will is not a problem of the spiritual economy of an isolated individual,

it is the problem of fixing responsibility within a community of individuals who isolate themselves in certain phases of their conduct. It is a social, not an individual, problem. The sense of contingency does not have to do with that which is inexplicable in our physical environment, for we assume at least nowadays that this is a mere lack of further knowledge. But in the possible solutions which may appear in the consciousness of others there is a contingency which even an ideal psychology could not overcome. It is the working together of individuals, the mutual dependence which is involved in the social ends and means, that presents the something which always resists the complete necessary formulation of our world. Finally, the problem of evil is not one of its existence or its reality, but of its social significance, and the possibility and duty of overcoming it. If the self is in its reflective processes isolated, there is no solution of these problems possible. No such individual can fix responsibility upon another or accept it when fixed by another. If the means and ends are not identical, there can be no community in meeting the problems of social existence. If the suffering of another is not a reality in my own world and is not identified with myself, there is no possibility of giving to the instinctive reaction against it the large social meaning and value which we feel it should have. The chasms between individuals in a social consciousness represent, not insoluble epistemological problems, but points at which reorganization needs to take place. Freedom means the ability to accept a responsibility by which a higher individual appears. Contingency means the possibility of a larger cognitive self through relations with other selves, and evil is the recognized inadequacy of conduct with reference to the social order which is to arise. From the standpoint of a social consciousness within which selves arise these chasms have the positive significance of the points of reconstruction.

Now, there is no doubt that the immediate analysis of consciousness reveals an essentially social nature in the self. From childhood up we see that the individual recognizes and formulates the personalities of others before he does his own; that the formulation of his own personality is the result of the organization of that of others. The necessity of the subject-object relation is as binding in the social self as in the physical. What does it mean, then, to say that a great chasm is fixed between the personalities of different individuals? Obviously the question is not one that can have meaning except from the standpoint of entities. Immediate consciousness sees no impassable chasm — can

conceive of none, for it must recognize others in order that it may state itself. If philosophy is not a formulation of entities, if it is not in search of being, but is a statement of the method by which the self in its full cognitive and social content meets and solves its difficulties, there is no more of an epistemological problem in the case of other minds than of other bodies. If the Hegelian idealism dissolves the difficulty in the latter case, it must also in the former. For cognition there can be no object which does not lie in an experience organized in a self, whether the object be social or physical. The objects are means for the purpose of conduct, not fixed presuppositions of conduct.

In a word, the idealistic position cannot be taken and then abandoned. It is an attitude which necessarily conditions all possible cognitive consciousness, as regards its form. No superpersonal unity can be conceivable, nor can minds be set up as entities outside the self, when the possibility of knowledge is conditioned by the unity of self, and the only possibility of objects in a known world is found in the cognitive subject. To say that there must be a subject which includes this subject-object relation is to set up one more object of thought, and to put this outside the cognitive process is to deny the idealistic position. If the subject is a thing, then we can speak of it as that which attempts to analyze itself and must always fail. If the subject is a phase in a process, the entire difficulty is gone. It is not trying to analyze itself as a thing. The analysis is but a moment in the movement of consciousness, and is directed toward the analysis and synthesis of objects lying in consciousness. Modern idealism may be rejected *in toto*; it cannot divide the world between itself and a metaphysics of realism.